

## EDITORIAL

# Articulation and Continuities: First-Year Experience in Higher Education

Birgit Schreiber,<sup>\*</sup> Thierry M. Luescher<sup>\*\*</sup> & Teboho Moja<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

Discussions around first-year experiences have been focused on student adjustment and inclusion into the culture and discourses of higher education. However, the issue is much broader and includes efforts of articulation of processes and continuity of experience. This guest-edited issue thus focuses on the wider issues and includes discussions on systemic articulation and ruptures in student experiences.

Developmental shifts when entering higher education are experienced by students in a variety of ways. It is incumbent on higher education and the wider system to enable continuity of experience and articulation of systems in such a way that student success is at the centre. Thus, the core articles in this issue focus on systemic articulation, in and out of classroom experience and the operational and ontological engagement of students, beyond the first-year experience. Moreover, while discussions on university success are usually focused on higher education agency, it is essential that the silence around causality and influence of schooling and wider societal issues are recognised. The articles in this issue purposefully bring together such a wider perspective.

A broader perspective on the student experience of higher education is also the subject of the book reviews published alongside the guest-edited research and reflective practitioner articles. Liezel Frick reviews the book *Going to university: The influence of higher education on the lives of young South Africans* authored by Jenni Case, Delia Marshall, Sioux McKenna and Disaapele Mogashana (Cape Town: African Minds, 2017). The book follows 73 young people who first entered university in South Africa some six years ago, and documents their battles and challenges as they move more or less successfully into, through and out of university studies.

\* Dr Birgit Schreiber is Senior Director of Student Affairs at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She is the Book Review editor and a member of the JSAA Editorial Executive. Email: [birgitschreiber@sun.ac.za](mailto:birgitschreiber@sun.ac.za)

\*\* Prof. Thierry Luescher is Research Director in the Education and Skills Development research programme of the Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, and affiliated Associate Professor in Higher Education Studies at the University of the Free State, Mangaung, South Africa. He is the JSAA journal manager. Email: [jsaa\\_editor@outlook.com](mailto:jsaa_editor@outlook.com)

\*\*\* Prof. Teboho Moja is Professor and Program Director, Higher Education Program, New York University, U.S.A., Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship, University of Pretoria, and Extraordinary Professor in the Institute of Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. She is JSAA's Editor-in-Chief.

Rejoice Nsibande carefully reviews a timely intervention into the question what meaning and practices of academic freedom apply to students today: Bruce Macfarlane's book *Freedom to Learn: The Threat to Student Academic Freedom and Why it Needs to be Reclaimed* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2017). Nsibande highlights how the book develops and sustains its argument that university policies are impacting negatively on students' lives; national policies demonstrate a lack of trust and respect for students as adults and the adoption of managerialism and performative culture has led to universities putting administrative processes and reporting to national bodies at the centre, at the cost of student success. Key to understanding Macfarlane's argument is that students – as adults – should collaborate over choices and decisions on what to learn, how to learn, when to learn, and how to live their lives.

Our third book review by Taryn Bernard discusses the first volume in the new Bloomsbury series "Understanding Student Experiences in Higher Education". The book *Negotiating learning and identity in higher education: Access, Persistence and Retention* is edited by Bongzi Bangeni and Rochelle Kapp (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Similar to *Going to University*, it is part of a longitudinal research with students; in this case, they are all young black students who are mostly first generation, working class and from single-parent families. Bernard particularly commends the authors for having been able to resist 'deficit constructions' of the students and rather to focus on the *agency* of the participants, and conducting research which highlights the *agentic* and *enabled* subject positions of the participants. Bernard argues that the book makes an important contribution to the global conversation around widening access and participation by offering an in-depth understanding of student experiences of black students at a historically white research university.

As customary, we publish in the first issue of the year the names of the reviewers of the previous volume and hereby wish to thank them for their time and expertise in evaluating and helping to select and improve the submissions we receive. We also welcome two new editors to the Editorial Executive, Prof. Sioux McKenna from Rhodes University in South Africa and Dr Bekele Workie Ayele from Kotebe Metropolitan University in Ethiopia, and Dr Angelina Wilson Fadiji as new editorial assistant. We are also grateful to Dr Annsilla Nyar for her work on compiling and editing the articles, and Ms Maretha Joyce for managing the publishing process of this *JSAA* guest-edited issue. Since accreditation, we have experienced a significant increase in author submissions; the Editorial Executive of *JSAA* is immensely grateful for the committed work of the editors and reviewers and other collaborators who voluntarily and without any remuneration contribute to the journal and its aims.

Finally, we would like to express our sadness about the untimely passing of Prof. Brenda Leibowitz in April 2018. Leibowitz held the SARChI Chair in Post-Secondary Education: Teaching and Learning at the University of Johannesburg; she was an internationally recognised expert in the scholarship of teaching and learning in the South and recently worked on key projects related to *JSAA*'s publishing scope, such as the ESRC-NRF project on the influence of rurality on students' transition to higher education. Leibowitz was part

of the broader *JSAA* community as a reviewer; in addition, her work has featured several times in the journal. In Vol. 2(1), Denise Wood reviewed the book *Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practices* edited by Vivienne Bozalek, Brenda Leibowitz, Ronelle Carolissen and Megan Boler (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), and Joy Papier reviewed Brenda Leibowitz' book *Higher Education for the Public Good: Views from the South* (Oakhill, USA: Trentham Books; and Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2012). Most recently, we published the interview by Gugu Wendy Khanye with Brenda Leibowitz and John Gardner on teaching and learning and the first-year experience (in Vol. 4 Issue 1). *Hamba kahle*, Prof. Leibowitz.

***How to cite:***

Schreiber, B., Luescher, T.M. & Moja, T. (2018). Articulation and Continuities: First-Year Experience in Higher Education. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 6(1), v–vii. DOI: 10.24085/jsaa.v6i1.3098